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ABSTRACT

Women of Hispanic origin are one of the fastest growing groups in the United States. In 1983 there were 5.1 million Hispanic women aged 16 years and older in the United States, but by the end of 1993 they numbered nearly 8 million. Women of Mexican origin remained the largest subgroup (4.7 million), followed by those of Puerto Rican (919,000) and Cuban (494,000) origin. Of the 58.4 million women in the labor force in 1993, 4.1 million were of Hispanic origin, with Cuban-origin women participating to the greatest degree. At present, women of Hispanic origin participate in the labor force to a lesser degree than Black and White women, but their labor force participation is expected to reach 58 percent by 2005 to 7 million. Most working Hispanic women are in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations, and Hispanic women are less likely to be in management or professional specialty jobs than non-Hispanic-origin women. In 1991, Hispanic women averaged only 78 percent of what non-Hispanic employed females earned. Nearly half (46 percent) of the working Hispanic-origin women over 25 years of age had less than a high school diploma, although there has been a steady rise in the numbers of Hispanic women enrolled in higher education. Eight tables summarize data about labor force participation. (SLD)

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Facts on Working Women

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WOMEN OF HISPANIC ORIGIN[1] IN THE LABOR FORCE

Women of Hispanic origin are one of the fastest growing groups in the Nation. In 1983 there were 5.1 million Hispanic women age 16 years and over in the United States. By the end of 1993 they numbered nearly 8 million (see Table 1). The largest subgroup continues to be women of Mexican origin (4.7 million), followed by women of Puerto Rican origin (919,000), and Cuban origin (494,000). The remaining 1.8 million were of other Spanish descent.[2]

Of all Hispanic origin women, those of Mexican descent recorded the largest population gains between 1983 and 1993--1.8 million women (see Table 1). Puerto Rican and Cuban women also experienced population growth, but not nearly as much as Mexican women. As with non-Hispanic white and black women, Cuban and Puerto Rican origin women outnumber their male counterparts. Only among persons of Mexican descent do males age 16 and over outnumber females--4.9 million as compared with 4.7 million.

Table 1
Population of Hispanic Origin Women
16 years and over, 1983 and 1993
(numbers in thousands)

	1983	1993	Change	Percent Change
All Hispanic women	5,084	7,928	2,844	55.9
Mexican origin women	2,961	4,735	1,774	59.9
Puerto Rican origin women	722	919	197	27.3
Cuban origin women	411	494	83	20.2

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings, January 1984 and 1994.*

[1]Hispanic origin refers to all persons who identify themselves as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central American, or other Hispanic origin or descent. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

[2]Includes persons of Central or South American origin and of other Hispanic origin.

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Although women of Hispanic origin have evident similarities--for example, being descendants of persons from Spain and/or Latin America or sharing a common language--they also exhibit such distinctive socioeconomic characteristics as age, marital status, educational attainment, labor force participation, and earnings.

In the United States, each major group of Hispanics tends to be located in different geographic regions. For example, Mexican origin Hispanics are most likely to be concentrated in the Southwest and west coast States of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and California. Puerto Rican origin Hispanics are mainly found in New York, New Jersey, and Illinois. Cuban origin Hispanics are located predominantly in Florida. According to 1990 census data, California was home to 1 of every 3 Hispanics in the United States and Texas was home to nearly 1 of every 5 Hispanics in the United States. In addition, there are large communities of Central Americans in the central east coast of the country. In 1990 nearly 9 of every 10 Hispanics lived in just 10 States. Combined, California, Texas, New York, and Florida were home to 70 percent of all Hispanics in the United States.

In March 1992 the median age of Hispanic women in the United States was 35.3 years. Overall, Hispanic women were slightly younger than non-Hispanic black or white women, whose median ages were 37.6 years and 41.9 years, respectively.

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION--Of the 58.4 million women in the civilian labor force in 1993, 4.1 million were of Hispanic origin. Showing the strongest labor force attachment of all Hispanic origin women were Cuban origin women who had participation rates above 50 percent throughout the 1980's. In 1993, however, their labor force participation rate dropped to 47.9 percent--their lowest figure in the past decade. Mexican origin women attained the 50 percent participation level in 1984 and in 1993 displayed the highest rate among all Hispanic women. Puerto Rican origin women continue to participate at a rate less than 50 percent (see Table 2). Their lower participation rate can be partially attributed to their younger ages, having fewer years of education, and more dependent children to rear than women of the other Hispanic groups.

Hispanic origin women continue to have lower participation rates than white and black women (see Table 3). When looked at collectively, however, Hispanic women and men have very similar participation rates to whites--65.9 percent and 66.7 percent, respectively. This is possible because Hispanic men continue to have noticeably higher participation rates than white men. In 1993, for example, Hispanic men participated at a rate of 80.0 percent, while white men were at 76.1 percent.. Female Hispanic teenagers (16-19 years of age) are less likely to be in the labor force than their male counterparts--36.5 percent as compared with 50.6 percent.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has projected that the number of Hispanic women in the labor force will grow from 4.0 million in 1992 to 7.0 million in 2005. This 72 percent increase will be the second largest among all other groups of women or men, regardless of race. Their labor force participation rate is expected to reach 58.0 percent. The largest increase of women in the labor force during this time period (86 percent) will be recorded by Asian and Pacific Islander women.

Table 2
Employment Status of Hispanic Origin Women,
16 Years of Age and Over, 1993 Annual Averages
(numbers in thousands)

	All Hispanic Women[1]	Mexican Origin Women	Puerto Rican Origin Women	Cuban Origin Women
Civilian noninstitutional population	7,928	4,735	919	494
Civilian labor force	4,120	2,456	417	237
Percent of population	52.0	51.9	45.3	47.9
Employed	3,669	2,177	372	218
Unemployed	451	279	45	18
Unemployment rate	10.9	11.4	10.8	7.7
Not in labor force	3,808	2,279	503	257

[1]Includes persons of Central or South American origin and of other Hispanic origin, not shown separately.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings, January 1994.*

Table 3
Labor Force Participation Rates of Women
by Race and Hispanic Origin, Selected Years

Women	1980	1984	1988	1993
All Women	51.5	53.6	56.6	57.9
Hispanic	**47.4**	**49.6**	**53.2**	**52.0**
White	51.2	53.3	56.4	58.0
Black	53.1	55.2	58.0	57.4

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Handbook of Labor Statistics, August 1989* and *Employment and Earnings, January 1994.*

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT--Hispanic origin women are one of the fastest growing groups of working women in the United States. Their total employment increased 76 percent--from 2.1 million in 1983 to 3.7 million in 1993. Of this 3.7 million, 2.2 million were of Mexican descent; 372,000 were of Puerto Rican origin; 218,000 were of Cuban origin; and the remaining 902,000 were of various Central, South American or other origin. Unlike their black and white counterparts, women of Hispanic origin did not experience even a small downturn in total employment during the recession period between 1990 and 1991.

Cultural norms concerning the roles of women have kept some Hispanic origin women out of paid employment, except to the extent that home duties are not disrupted. Younger Hispanic females, many less tied to tradition or with no children, will seek paid employment. They may leave the labor force, however, at the birth of one or more children. According to the March 1992 Current Population Survey (a sample survey of 60,000 U.S. households, conducted monthly, by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics), among Hispanic origin women 20 to 24 years of age who were not in the labor force in 1991, more than 7 out of 10 cited family or home responsibilities as their main activity.

Double digit unemployment plagued Mexican origin and Puerto Rican origin women in 1993--their unemployment rates were 11.4 percent and 10.8 percent, respectively. Cuban origin women, who generally have **higher educational attainment** and are typically an **older group of women** than other Hispanic origin women, had a much lower unemployment rate--7.7 percent. That rate was still higher than for white women --6.0 percent.

The unemployment rate for teenage Hispanic origin women in 1993--26.4 percent--was much higher than for white female teenagers (14.6 percent), but lower than for black female teenagers (37.2 percent). Contributing to this high unemployment rate is the fact that many Hispanic origin teenagers--female, as well as male, leave school or drop out before graduation. In addition, many may have trouble communicating in English which could lead to various forms of job discrimination.

OCCUPATIONS--In 1993, 3.7 million Hispanic origin females were job holders. The largest proportion (39 percent) worked in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations usually as retail sales workers, secretaries, or cashiers. Hispanic origin women are much more likely to be employed as operators, fabricators, laborers, and service workers than non-Hispanic origin women. They are less likely to be employed in the higher paying management or professional specialty jobs than non-Hispanic origin women (see Table 4).

In 1993 the 10 leading occupations of Hispanic origin women in descending order were: retail and personal sales workers; secretaries; cashiers; private household cleaners and servants; nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants; janitors and cleaners; textile sewing machine operators; maids; cooks; and bookkeepers, accounting and auditing clerks. These jobs require little training and offer low wages.

According to BLS projections, private household cleaners and servants and textile sewing machine operators are among the occupations that will experience large employment declines between 1992-2005. The other eight occupations will experience job growth, however, median weekly earnings for women (Hispanic and non-Hispanic) employed as full-time wage and salary workers in these eight jobs ranged between only $221-$386 in 1993. Hispanic women, as well as their white and black counterparts, need access to increased education and job skills training, but especially in skills that will be demanded of the work force of the future. Basic education should include a knowledge of computers as well as mathematics, science, and communication skills.

Table 4
Percent Distribution of Employed Hispanic Origin and Non-Hispanic Women, 1993

Occupation Group	Hispanic Women	Non-Hispanic Women
Percent	100.0	100.0
Management and professional specialty	16.6	28.3
Technical, sales and administrative support	39.2	43.2
Service	25.6	18.0
Precision, production, craft, and repair	2.8	2.0
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	14.0	7.6
Farming, forestry, and fishing	1.7	1.0

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings, January 1994.*

EARNINGS--Earnings include total money wages or salary received for work performed as an employee. According to the Bureau of the Census' publication "The Hispanic Population in the United States: March 1992 (Revised)," Hispanic origin women[3] who worked year-round, full-time (50 weeks or more) had median annual earnings of $16,244 in 1991. This was 78 percent of what similarly employed non-Hispanic females earned. Central American origin women earned $14,290; Mexican origin women earned $15,645; Puerto Rican origin women earned $18,656; Cuban origin earned $19,749; and women of other Hispanic origin earned $19,999 in 1991. Only 4.3 percent of Hispanic origin women who worked year round, full time earned $50,000 or more, compared with 17.7 percent of similar Hispanic origin men. The majority of Hispanic women--54.4 percent--earned between $10,000 and $24,000.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT--Of the 6.2 million Hispanic origin women age 25 and over in the United States in 1993, nearly half (46 percent) had less than a high school diploma. Even though Hispanic women with less than a high school diploma showed little attachment to the labor force--36.9 percent in 1993--they were, however, more apt to be labor force participants than similarly educated white and black women--27.9 and 29.4 percent, respectively. Having a high school diploma dramatically increases labor force activity for all women, regardless of race. Six out of every 10 Hispanic origin women with high school diplomas (no college) were labor force participants in 1993. For similarly educated white and black women, the figures were 55.0 and 63.9 percent, respectively. Attainment of an associate degree or graduation from college raises labor force participation substantially for Hispanic women (see Table 5).

[3]Hispanic women 15 years old and over.

Among Hispanic origin women 25 to 29 years old, only 56 percent had completed 12 or more years of schooling in 1991 (see Table 6). For black and white women of the same age group, the rates were much higher--81 and 91 percent, respectively. At no time during the 1980's did Hispanic origin women 25 to 29 years old record a high school graduation rate above 70 percent. Their peak year was 1988--at 65 percent. Lower rates since that time may have been impacted by the recession and/or an influx of lesser educated immigrants.

Table 5
Labor Force Participation of Hispanic Origin Women
by Educational Attainment, 1993

	Population	In Labor Force	Percent of Population
Total	6,117	3,285	53.2
Less than a high school diploma	2,865	1,056	36.9
High school graduate, no college	1,717	1,053	61.4
Some college, no degree	763	533	69.9
Associate degree	298	230	77.2
College graduate	534	412	77.1

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, unpublished tabulations from the *Current Population Survey (CPS): 1993 Annual Averages.*

The number of bachelor's and doctor's degrees awarded to Hispanic women has more than doubled between 1977 and 1990 (see Table 7). The number of Hispanic women receiving master's degrees has also increased dramatically. Throughout the 1980's there has been a steady rise in the number of Hispanic women enrolled in institutions of higher education. In undergraduate schools between 1980 and 1988, they increased their enrollment from 222,000 to 344,000; in graduate schools from 16,000 to 22,000; in professional school, they doubled from 2,000 to 4,000.

Table 6
Years of School Completed by Hispanic Origin Women
Ages 25 to 29, by Percent, Selected Years

Category of Hispanic Women	1981	1986	1991
Percentage who have completed 12 or more years of school	59.6	57.3	56.3
Percentage of high school graduates who have completed 1 year or more of college	36.8	40.3	42.6
Percentage of high school graduates who have completed 4 years of college or more	11.0	15.9	18.6

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center For Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education, 1992.*

Table 7
Number of Degrees Awarded to Hispanic Origin Women, 1977 and 1990

Degree Level	1977	1990
Associate	7,531	12,252
Bachelor	8,425	17,815
Advanced	3,125	5,678
Master's	2,803	4,339
Doctor's	139	366
First-professional	183	973

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center For Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education, 1992*.

Nationwide, there were about 370,000 Hispanics 25 years and over, with at least a graduate or professional degree in 1990. Nearly 24 percent of the Nation's Hispanics with graduate or professional degrees lived in California. About 15 percent lived in Florida, 13 percent in Texas, and 12 percent in New York.

FAMILIES MAINTAINED BY WOMEN--Of the 12 million families maintained by women in the United States in 1993, 1.3 million (11 percent) were Hispanic. Women maintained one-fourth of all Hispanic families (1,302,000 out of 5,373,000). Sixty-eight percent of female headed Hispanic families included children under age 18. Between 1983 and 1993, the number of families maintained by women has increased--65 percent for Hispanics; 32 percent for blacks; and 16 percent for whites (see Table 8).

Families maintained by Hispanic women had the lowest median income when compared with other types of Hispanic families. In 1992 their median income was $12,894--for married-couple families, $28,515; and for male householder families, no wife present, $19,468.

Table 8
Families Maintained by Women, by Race, and Hispanic Origin, 1983, 1988, and 1993

Race	1983	1988	1993
Hispanic	**791,000**	**1,060,000**	**1,302,000**
Black	2,780,000	3,143,000	3,673,000
White	6,750,000	7,299,000	7,860,000

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings, January 1984, 1989, and 1994.*

POVERTY--Within the Hispanic origin population, 6.7 million persons lived below the poverty level in 1992. Adult Hispanic women (age 18 and over) represented 30 percent of the Hispanic population that was poor. There were 3.1 million Hispanic children living below the poverty level. In nearly half (49 percent) of Hispanic families maintained by women, the female householder had an income below the poverty level.

As the number of families maintained by women continues to increase, so has the rate of welfare dependency among these families, especially among Mexican and Puerto Rican women. Given that Puerto Ricans experience the highest poverty rates of all Hispanic groups, it is not surprising that they were more likely than other groups to have received some form of transfer income--aid to families with dependent children; old age assistance; general assistance; aid to the blind; and aid to the permanently and totally disabled. In fact, 21 percent of all Puerto Rican families received public assistance payments in 1970, and a slightly larger share, 24 percent, in 1980.[4]

[4]Frank D. Bean and Marta Tienda, "The Hispanic Population of the United States," (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1987), p.358.

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